
“ONE WORLD, ONE DREAM” AND UNIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHTS

An open letter proposing seven changes for upholding Olympic principles

At the start of the one-year countdown to the 2008 Beijing Olympics, more than 40 mainland activists and intellectuals signed an open letter addressed to Chinese leaders and the international community, proposing measures to end human rights abuses and calling for the release of prisoners of conscience before the Olympics. Jacques Rogge, Chair of the International Olympic Committee, was in Beijing at the time to attend a two-day ceremony marking the one-year countdown, and many activists were put under close watch, while petitioners were rounded up and removed from the city.

An Open Letter to Chinese and World Leaders on the 2008 Beijing Olympics:

Hu Jintao, President, People’s Republic of China
Wu Bangguo, Chair, Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress of China
Wen Jiabao, Premier of the State Council of China
Jacques Rogge, Chair, International Olympic Committee
Doru Romulus Costea, President, United Nations Human Rights Council
Louise Arbour, High Commissioner, United Nations Office for Human Rights
Leaders of democratic states concerned about promoting freedom and human rights
International NGOs concerned with human rights
Members of the communities of sports, arts and entertainment, academe, and business around the world

Respected Leaders and Fellow World Citizens:

Upholding the fundamental principles of the Olympic spirit, including “respect for universal fundamental ethical principles” and “the harmonious development of

man, with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity” (Olympic Charter, Preamble);

Taking note of the Chinese government’s official 2008 Olympic theme “One World, One Dream” and the Beijing Olympic Committee’s stated objectives of hosting an “Open, Green, and Humane Olympics”; and

Mindful of the growing number of questions and criticisms in our own society and from around the world about the violations of the human rights of Chinese citizens in the name of the Beijing Olympics;

We, the undersigned citizens of the People’s Republic of China, here voice our concerns and to propose changes in the ways in which our government is handling its preparations for the Olympics.

Today, August 8, 2007, marks the start of the one-year countdown to the 2008 Summer Olympics, a mega-event for China and the world. We, as citizens of the People’s Republic of China, ought to be feeling pride in our country’s glory in hosting the Games, whose purposes include the symbolization of peace, friendship, and fairness in the world community. We also ought to feel uplifted by the watchword chosen by the Beijing Olympic Committee: “One World, One Dream.”

Instead, we feel disappointment and doubt as we witness the continuing systematic denial of the human rights of our fellow citizens even while—and sometimes because—Olympic preparations are moving forward. We hear “One World” and wonder: What kind of world will this be? “One Dream”? Whose dream is it that is coming true? We are gravely concerned about the question of whether authorities in our country can suc-



Photo: Reuters

cessfully host the Olympic Games in an authentic Olympic spirit so that the 2008 Beijing games can become an event of which China and the world community can be proud.

As the one world that we share “globalizes,” lives and dreams are becoming increasingly intertwined. One person’s “world dream,” especially if it is implemented with unchecked power, and with endorsement from the world community, can turn into misery and nightmare for others. “One world” can still be a world where people suffer discrimination, political and religious persecution, and deprivation of liberty, as well as poverty, genocide and war. Millions of people who survived such miseries and disasters in the 20th century have come to appreciate, and to pursue, human rights. Universal human rights have become the bedrock concept in pursuing lasting peace, sustainable development and justice.

If “one dream” is truly to belong to all cultures and communities, it must involve protection of basic rights and liberties for all. Even the powerful, the rich and

privileged might be punished unjustly tomorrow if fundamental rights are not assured today.

The government that rules our country has pledged to the Chinese people and to the world to protect human rights. It has acceded to obligations under numerous international human rights conventions and treaties, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and it has amended the Chinese constitution to include guarantees of human rights.

In order to avoid misunderstanding, and in order to alert the international community to un-Olympic conduct that tarnishes the true spirit of the Games, we, the undersigned citizens of the People’s Republic of China, endorse the government’s Olympic slogan with the following vital addition:

“One World, One Dream, *and Universal Human Rights.*”

Without promoting human rights, which are the fundamental principle of universal ethics in China and elsewhere, it is gratuitous to promote “One World.”

Without the protection of the human rights of all Chinese citizens equally—i.e., without abolition of the rural-urban residential control system, without an end to discrimination against women and sexual, ethnic and faith minorities, and without ending the suppression of political dissent—it is senseless to talk about “One Dream” for all of China.

China’s government has promised the International Olympic Committee to “promote human rights” and has pledged to the United Nations Human Rights Council to “uphold the highest standard of human rights.” On paper it has taken certain steps toward improving human rights—in 2003, for example, abolishing the arbitrary detention system known as “Custody and Repatriation” and in 2004 adding “human rights protection” as an amendment to China’s constitution. We believe that the government should be able to do much more.

Little has been done, in practice, to carry out the promises that have been made on paper. On the contrary, we have experienced and witnessed violations of human rights many times—in press censorship and control of the Internet, in the persecution of human rights defenders and of people who expose environmental or public health disasters, in the exploitation of poor or disadvantaged social groups and in retaliation against them when they protest, and even in abuses by corrupt officials who are involved in the construction of Olympic facilities and city beautification projects that are aimed to prepare for the Olympics. All of these actions violate not only international standards but provisions of the Chinese constitution as well.

We find no consolation or comfort in the rise of grandiose sports facilities, or a temporarily beautified Beijing city, or the prospect of Chinese athletes winning medals. We know too well how these glories are built on the ruins of the lives of ordinary people, on the forced removal of urban migrants, and on the sufferings of victims of brutal land grabbing, forced eviction, exploitation of labor and arbitrary detention.

Out of deep affection for our motherland and our sense of duty as citizens of the world, we will do our best, and urge leaders in China and in the world community to

join hands with us, to make the Beijing Olympics a turning point in China’s rise to greatness. China has the opportunity to use the Games to build true harmony on the basis of respect for human dignity and freedom and to become a respectable member of the community of civilized nations—not by loud rhetoric or brute force, but by taking action to promote human rights at home and in the world.

In the “One World” in which we live, the dreams that are coming true in China today will significantly shape everyone’s future. Therefore, in order to promote a successful Olympics consistent with human rights, we propose the following measures:

1. Declare amnesty for all prisoners of conscience so that they can enjoy the Olympic games in freedom.
2. Open China’s borders to all Chinese citizens who have been forced into exile for their beliefs, expression or faith, so that they can reunite with their loved ones and celebrate the glory of the Olympics in their motherland;
3. Implement the government ordinance to allow foreign journalists to conduct interviews and reporting without preapproval by authorities before October 17, 2008, granting Chinese journalists the same access and independence.
4. Provide fair compensation to the victims of forced evictions and land appropriations that have been done in order to construct Olympic facilities, and release people who have been detained or imprisoned (often violently) for protesting or resisting such actions.
5. Protect the rights of workers on all Olympic construction sites, including their right to organize independent labor unions; end discrimination against rural migrant laborers and give them fair compensation.
6. End police operations intended to intercept, detain or send home petitioners who try to travel to Beijing to complain about local officials’ mis-

conduct; abolish illegal facilities used for incarcerating, interrogating and terrorizing petitioners; end the “clean up” operations aimed at migrants that demolish their temporary housing and close down schools for their children.

7. Establish a system of citizen oversight over Olympics spending and provide public accounting and independent auditing of Olympics-related expenditures; make the process of awarding contracts to businesses transparent, and hold legally accountable any official who embezzles or wastes public funds.

We further suggest setting up an independent Beijing Olympics Watch Committee, composed of independent experts and representatives of non-governmental organizations and affected communities such as migrant laborers and people who have been forcibly relocated. This Committee would oversee the implementation of the above proposals. It should be allowed to operate independently, to examine plans, to interview freely and to release its findings to the public. Citizen participation is key to a successful Olympics.

If proposals even as straightforward as the foregoing cannot be adopted, we feel certain that the Beijing Olympics will not go down in history as the glorious events that everyone wishes them to be. We do not want to “politicize” the Olympic movement. However, pushing the Games through in ways that violate human rights and that hurt people who are forced into silence, all in the name of a “dream” that belongs only to “some” people, not our whole world, will only plant seeds of resentment that will exacerbate the crises in China and affect the future of the world.

Sincerely yours,

Signed (name followed by location of residence and profession):

DING Zilin (Beijing, professor, leader of “Tiananmen Mothers”)

LIU Xiaobo (Beijing, writer, president of independent Chinese PEN)

BAO Zhunxin (Beijing, historian)

YU Haocheng (Beijing, legal scholar)

DAI Qing (Beijing, writer/journalist)

BAO Tong (Beijing, former member of CCP Central Committee)

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WANG Debang (Beijing, writer)

This letter was a project of Chinese Human Rights Defenders, a non-political, non-governmental network based in China and dedicated to nonviolent advancement of rights through rule of law. The letter appeared on the network Web site <http://crd-net.org> on August 7, 2007. The original Chinese version can be viewed at http://crd-net.org/Article/Class5/200708/20070807151034_5304.html.